



## HOWARD COUNTY BUREAU OF UTILITIES

8250 Old Montgomery Road ■ Columbia, Maryland 21045 ■ 410-313-4900

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Stephen C. Gerwin, PE

[www.howardcountymd.gov](http://www.howardcountymd.gov)

Bureau Chief

FAX 410-313-4919

[SGerwin@howardcountymd.gov](mailto:SGerwin@howardcountymd.gov)

TDD 410-313-4401

# Cold Weather Best Practices

- Water pipes located next to an outside wall are often subjected to sub-freezing temperatures. Any plumbing located in a garage or any other unheated building is susceptible to low temperatures. Any exposed pipes should be wrapped or insulated. There are other devices such as heat tape which can be used to keep pipes from freezing.
- For piping on the outside walls of the house on very cold nights leave the hot and cold water dripping, this will help reduce the probability of pipes freezing.
- Pipes in cabinets could be located against an outside wall. Even if these pipes have been insulated, you should consider leaving the cabinet doors open to allow the heat in the room to keep them from freezing.
- Seal all air leaks that may let an icy blast reach your pipes.
- Turn off and drain any outside hose bibs.
- If your house has a crawl space located under it, close all air vents located in the foundation wall during extremely cold temperatures to keep the exposed plumbing from freezing.
- Make sure you know where your main water cutoff valve in your home and assure it works.
- For loss of water service or sewage backup always call the County first. (410-313-4900)
- If pipes do freeze, open the cold water faucet nearest the frozen pipe to relieve the pressure. Use gentle heat such as a light bulb or hair dryer to thaw the pipe; **do not use an open flame.**
- Any fire hydrants that are covered or obstructed by snow, please shovel them out.
- Keep obstructions **including snow** away from storm water runoff drains.
- If you plan an extended vacation keep enough heat on in the residences to prevent pipes from freezing.